

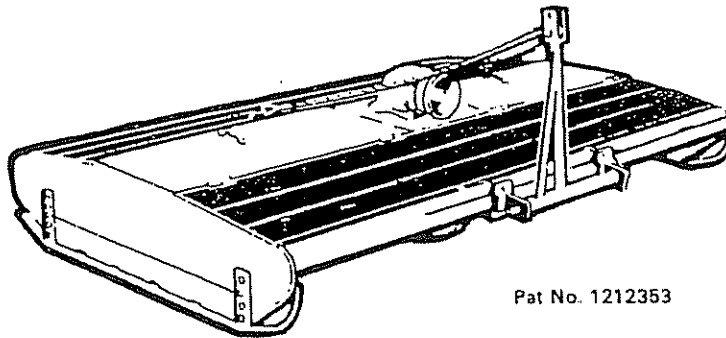
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MAY 1994

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF HORTICULTURE WEEK

## Lottery money to buy back playing fields?

A LEAKED REPORT FROM Sports Minister Iain Sprouat has turned the spotlight on the plight of our public and private playing fields once again.

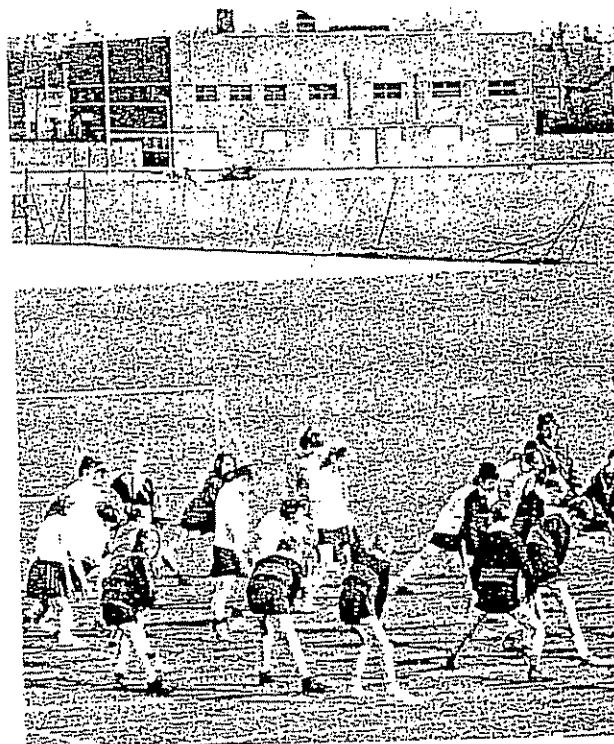
The report, written in response to a request by Prime Minister that plans should be produced for the introduction of more competitive sport in schools, is believed to refer to the possibility of buying back sold-off playing fields with money raised by the National Lottery.

But enthusiasm for the suggestion has been tinged with caution. Derek Walder of the Institute of Groundsmanship said: "We would welcome it, but would like to see more details. Will the Government be prepared to fund ripping up car parks to reinstate playing fields, or encourage private clubs and business to reinstate fields sold during the recession?"

The Government tends to view the National Lottery as the fairy with a magic wand but it is likely to be very much a lucky dip process, with everybody scrabbling for a bit.

Don Earley of the National Playing Fields Association dismissed the retrospective approach as not fruitful.

"A more sensible proposal would be to buy at-risk fields with national lottery money, but only with certain caveats to



avoid profiteering by private individuals and councils, and to guarantee the long-term security of such fields.

The recommendations of

both Departments will only come to light through the Secretary of State John Patten in his review of the National Curriculum next month.

## AGMA fights grass seed VAT plans

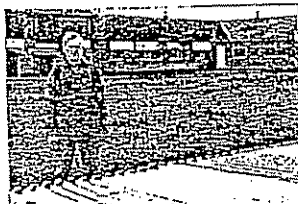
THE AMENITY GRASS Marketing Association (AGMA) is to fight Customs & Excise plans to charge VAT on amenity grass seed.

If the tax is implemented, says AGMA, even the VAT registered user will suffer. Prepayments will threaten cash flow, and the extra work will cost money.

Andrew Wallace, commercial director of Force Limagrain, fears some amenity customers may start using agricultural grade seeds instead. Derek Smith, amenity seeds manager at Inter Seeds, believes that the move may lead small sports clubs to cut back of the amount of seed they use annually to restore pitches, with disastrous long-term implications for the quality of the nation's sports surfaces.

Paul Rooke, manager of seeds at the UK Agricultural Suppliers Trade Association, warned: "Customs and Excise may find that the amount of money it will cost them to implement this is around the income they will get from it."

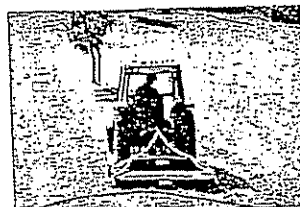
### THIS MONTH



★ **Turf Answers Troubles** with water seepage tackled by our experts **Page 15**



★ **Ray Day**, course manager, on working with contractors **Page 24**



★ **Roller Mowers:** can they handle cylinder mowers jobs? **Page 33**



★ **Bob Dixon**, Aintree head groundsman, on the build-up to the National **Page 46**

A new breed of rotary mower is challenging the cylinder mower's status as the only machine capable of giving a quality finish. Michael Bird reports

# CHEAP AND CAREFUL

TAKE A TRACTOR-mounted rotary mower, add a twist to the blades, a floating top link and rollers front and rear and you've got yourself an economical mower capable of producing an even and consistent cut on both short and longer grass.

That, at least, is the theory and, although it may be not quite as straightforward in practical terms, the twin roller rotary mower, or 'roller mower', as it has come to be known, is mounting a serious challenge for territory once regarded as the sole domain of cylinder-type machines.

This impetus is due to the mower's ability to remain on top of the turf while accurately following ground contours to leave a neat, level and striped finish on areas as diverse as sportsfields, parks, golf courses, polo pitches and roadside verges.

The two key factors which give the roller mower its advantage over cylinders are the significantly lower purchase and running costs for every metre of cut. Although a roller mower's rotary blades cannot match the cut height or finish achieved by cylinders, the introduction of mulching designs which chop the grass several times before discharge has gone a long way to appeasing critics.

Similarly, while the narrow working width of the early roller rotaries hindered output, this is now being countered by wider models which come close to the workrate of the cylinder mower.

Although seeming to have burst onto the grass maintenance scene over the past five years, the roller mower has, in fact, been working in Britain since the mid-1970s. The first machines came from Australia and were soon modified to suit lush British conditions. Alterations included the fitting of shields between the blades to prevent grass being moved sideways, forming unsightly windrows which were difficult to disperse



**Dowdeswell 6ft Rollermower has a floating top mast allowing free movement over bumps and undulations.**

The shields also helped the blades achieve a mulching effect, producing a finer chop and less surface deposits.

The twin roller principle mirrors that of a golf greens mower, which has rollers in front of and behind the cutting cylinder to produce an even, precise cut irrespective of turf undulations.

By running on full width rollers front and rear, a correctly set roller mower is able to remain parallel to the ground under

most conditions while avoiding sinkage and scalping. The machine can also work across kerb edges and pathways without fear of blade or surface damage.

The full width support provided by the rollers means that roller mowers can be of heavier, more robust construction than wheel or skid mounted rotary mowers. This makes them ideal for use on a wide variety of turf surfaces ranging from firm, level cricket outfield to the variable

conditions found on golf courses, parks and amenity sites.

The inherently stronger build of the roller mower is also considered better able to withstand the heavier hand of the less experienced operator.

Alternative height control systems such as caster wheels or skids cannot provide the same degree of support for the mower, making them more suited to lighter weight machines for work on finer turf and in drier.



## ROTARY MOWERS



firmer conditions behind smaller tractors.

The benefits of the roller mower do not stop here. Having a roller front and rear means that the pre-set cutting height and attitude are maintained irrespective of whether the tractor is working in a forward or reverse gear. This can make for faster, more convenient operation in restricted or awkward areas where it may be easier to mow in reverse.

Improved safety is another aspect, as the rollers and side shields of the roller mower help to retain stones and other debris within the confines of the machine, reducing risk of injury to bystanders or the operator.

Although the twin roller design means that the mower is better able to resist sinkage and produce a consistent, more even striped finish, the flattening effect of the front roller does limit the height of grass that can be cut in one pass.

Aerofoil blade designs help to lift the flattened grass prior to cutting. However, maximum length of cut is limited in most cases to about 50mm (2in). Anything longer, and two passes are normally recommended to get the grass down to the required finished length.

A plus point of the front roller, however, is its ability to push stones and divots into the surface before being hit by the blades.

In order to gain an insight into the pros and cons of some of the

#### **Wessex P18R Roller Mower has a 1.8m cut width from three belt driven blades.**

roller mowers currently available on the market, we talked to users of three rival machines.

#### **DOWDESWELL ROLLERMOWER** User: Elfed Thomas, Environmental Grass Services

Environmental Grass Services based at Caerwys, near Mold, Clwyd, provides a contract grass cutting service to local authorities, industry and other organisations in north Wales, Cheshire and Greater Manchester. Owner, Elfed Thomas, purchased a Dowdeswell 6ft Rollermower last year to supplement the hydraulic gang mowers used previously on all of his grass cutting contracts.

"At around £2,500, the Dowdeswell roller mower is a low cost investment which has proved a viable alternative to the gangs throughout the year," he says. "Its full width rollers help it stay on top of the turf when the going is soft. This makes it an ideal machine at the start of the season to take off the first flush of growth."

"For parks and playing fields we use it alternatively with the gangs during the season, producing clear benefits from the firmer rolling of the turf and the reduced maintenance costs."

Thomas says that the decision to purchase the Dowdeswell Roller Mower was prompted initially by his inability to gang mow all the areas in his contracts due to wet patches or the high stone content of reseeded sites.

"Not only can the roller mower get across the ground without sinking or marking but it presses down stones which

**"The machine has needed very little attention. It is reliable, well-built and does a great job"**

would damage a cylinder," he says. "By working in reverse on ornamental areas, we are able also to eliminate the tramlines caused by the tractor's wheels flattening the grass prior to cutting in a forward direction."

The rollers on Dowdeswell's Rollermower have tapered ends, enabling the mower to turn on turf without scuffing. A chain assembly allows the mower to float freely over undulations. Maximum height of cut is 90mm (3.5in).

Specially-designed fastenings are used on the free-swinging blades to prevent wear to the securing nuts for easy removal.

Heavy duty greasable bearings on the rollers are protected by dust caps and steel cover plates, a feature appreciated by Thomas because it helps avoid damage caused by knocks from trees, posts and kerbs.

The blade rotors are belt driven from a central gearbox, and incorporate a spring-loaded tensioner giving the ability to change the belts without difficulty.

"Daily maintenance involves only greasing," says Thomas. "We carry a spare belt and set of blades in the tractor, but the machine has needed very little attention. It is reliable, well built and does a great job. My only grumble concerns the strength of the blades, which can be damaged badly by goal net spikes. If it were possible to uprate the blade strength a little, Dowdeswell would have an absolute winner on their hands."

#### **WESSEX P18R** User: John Fletcher, Kirkdees Metropolitan Council operations manager

Kirkdees Metropolitan Council in West Yorkshire is a local authority with long experience of the attributes and shortcomings of roller mowers. The council has owned three machines over the past 14 years, basing them at its Bradley Park Golf

**Attack's F50 Blowermower is a variation on the company's Roller Mower. It has a 1.5m cut and collection facility.**

Course, which is near Huddersfield.

The authority's latest machine, a Wessex P18R, arrived in early 1993 and is used to maintain virtually all of the semi-rough on the course every week during the summer. Mounted behind an MF 30D tractor, the six foot (1.8m) wide mower was selected after extensive demonstrations of other makes and models of rotary mower.

In common with the majority of machines, it has two large diameter rollers carried on bearings mounted at the front and rear of the two side skids.

Three overlapping rotary blades are driven by twin belts from a central PTO-powered gearbox, with cutting height adjustable from 20-100mm on twin screw adjusters. Movement over undulations is achieved by a floating headstock and tractor power requirement of the £2,325 mower is in the 30 to 50hp range.

Kirklees Metropolitan Council's operations manager, John Fletcher, commented that the requirement was to keep the golf course semi-rough looking neat and tidy at an average cut length of 38mm. "We found that the Wessex roller mower left a good striped finish with the clippings evenly distributed across the ground," he says. "The only alternative to a roller mower on anything longer than a couple of inches is a set of big diameter gangs. We could neither justify their purchase nor running costs on a golf course."

John Fletcher points out that a



major percentage of the 120 acre course is semi-rough, so the machine earns its keep primarily during the summer months.

Other areas where it has been put to work include a recreation ground being prepared for an annual junior international football tournament where the updraught from the blades helps lift and hold ryegrass stalks for cutting.

"Overall, we are pleased with the finish the mower produces," he says. "It's proved reliable and makes a highly economical alternative to gangs where the grass does not need to be cut close or the clippings reduced to a centimetre or less in length."

"On the downside, the main criticism is the slow workrate due to its limited working width. However, with an annual main-

tenance cost being some 90 per cent less than a tractor-powered cylinder mower, I am prepared to accept this."

#### ATTACK ENGINEERING BLOWERMOWER

User: Elmer Fisher, grounds maintenance manager, Cleethorpes Borough Council

A roller mower with a difference is operated by Cleethorpes Borough Council. South Humber-side. Known as the Blowermower, it is manufactured by Attack Engineering and features a grass collection facility in the form of a rear discharge chute with reusable clip-on bags.

The design of the single rotating disc with four cutting blades means that working width is limited to a maximum of 1.5m (5ft).

This has not deterred grounds maintenance manager, Elmer Fisher, whose principal requirement is the cutting and collection of grass in extensive wild flower areas within the 350 acre Cleethorpes Country Park.

"Removing the clippings prevents a build-up of fertility and proliferation of new grass, which would otherwise smother the flowers," he explained. "The mower's ability to ride evenly over the ground and collect the grass has made the job simplicity itself. If we do not wish to collect, then the bag can be left off."

Other areas where the Blowermower is used includes grass verges on dual carriageways and on playing fields, where its ability to remove bents is appreciated by the groundstaff.

"Final selection came down to

## ROTARY ALTERNATIVES TO THE ROLLER MOWER

ALTHOUGH A ROLLER mower's finish is arguably the best of any rotary-type machine, there is still an extensive range of other ride-on and tractor-mounted rotary variations from which to choose.

Those who want dedicated ride-on models can choose from front-mounted or mid-mounted versions, which are suitable for a wide variety of grass lengths and cutting situations.

The out-front rotary is ideal for the regular maintenance of longer, tougher grass on amenity sites, housing estates and golf courses, where the forward deck and excellent visibility make for a complete and convenient cut.

The most recent development

in mower technology involves extending the cut width without compromising transport ability by means of folding wing units mounted on the main cutting deck or to either side of the power unit.

In more restricted areas, the compact size and good manoeuvrability of a dedicated mid-mounted machine make for high workrates and a clean finish close to trees, borders and fences.

Both front and mid-mounted purpose-built rotary mowers can be used with collectors and are capable of producing a quality cut when used regularly at their lowest settings, normally adjusted on a pair of caster wheels.

For those not wishing to tie up a power unit with a mower all year round, there are front, mid and rear mounted rotary decks available for fitting to most makes of compact and small tractor.

Height adjustable on skids or caster wheels, they offer a reasonable cut at an economical price on a wide variety of grass areas, but cannot follow contours nor remain on top of the turf in the same way as a roller mower.

Mounting of a mid deck also takes longer, but it can be left on the tractor while other attachments are used at the front or rear.

Moving up the power scale, there are an increasing number

of wide-cut finishing mowers appearing on the market, able to achieve a high workrate with a good finish on most open, level turf surfaces.

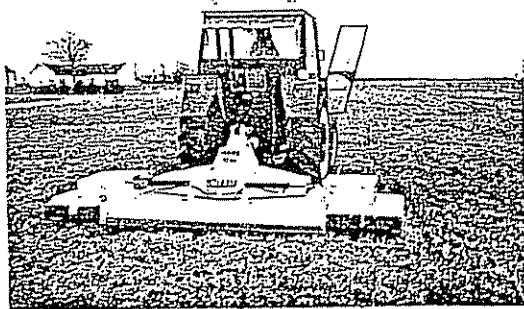
Wing units fold hydraulically for transport, enabling the tractor-mower combination to be moved conveniently from site to site. The line finish is achieved by high speed twisted blades which create an updraught to lift and hold the grass for cutting.

Although there are still many applications where there is no alternative to the finish produced by a cylinder mower, the latest generation of rotary mowers are coming close in a number of areas, while still offering users a significant cost advantage.



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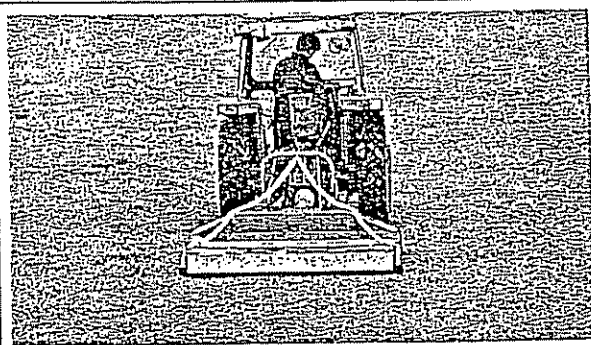


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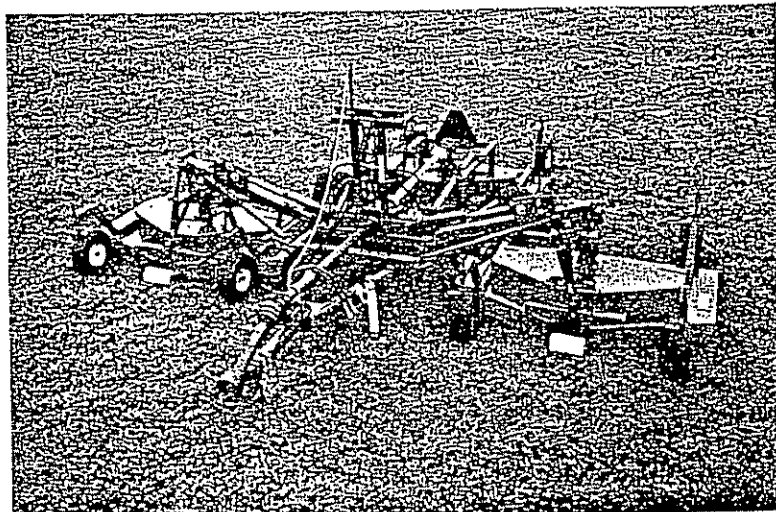
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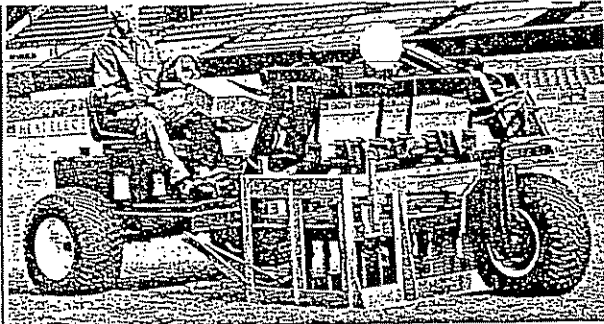
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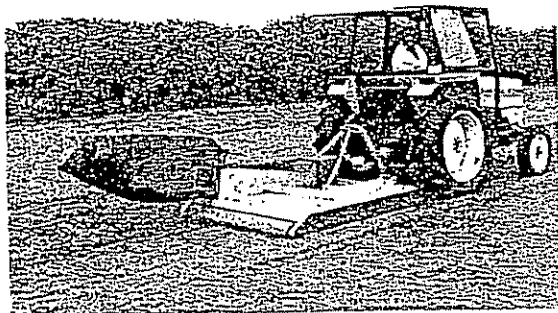
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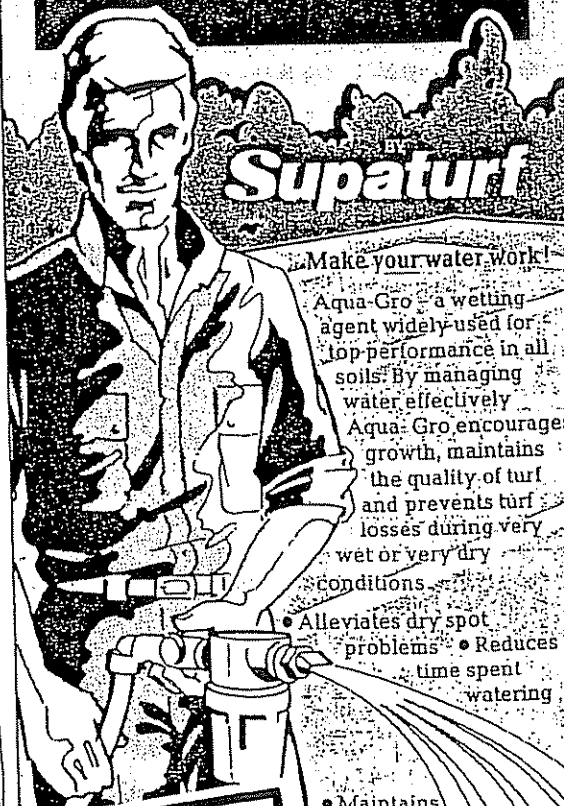
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# ROTARY MOWERS

to cost," comments Fisher. "At less than £2,800, there is nothing comparable on the market to the Attack machine. Not only can we collect, but we have the ability to cut normally without marking on most surfaces."

The Attack Blowermower is one of a range of roller mowers marketed by the company. Others include a standard roller mower and a grass mulcher with special patented blades and recycling deflectors.

The large diameter of the single disc blade design produces a front to rear measurement greater than most competitors. This can affect the mower's ability to avoid scalping over severe undulations, but should not affect work quality on level surfaces.

The disc is direct driven from a gearbox protected by slip clutch and cutting height can be varied on four roller adjusters up to a maximum of 100mm (4in).

"It's a tough machine, over-engineered for the work we give it," says Fisher. "Its only limitation is its working width. But we could have another one and still be in pocket." □

## FACTFILE

### Wessex Farm Machinery Sales Co (Tel: 0420 478111)

P18R Roller Mower requires tractors from 30 to 50hp. It has a 1.8m (6ft) cutting width provided by three overlapping rigid blade rotors. Cutting height adjustable from 20-100mm (0.8-4in) on screw adjusters. Price: £2,325.

### Dowdeswell Engineering Co (Tel: 0926 812335)

Manufacture 6ft and 8ft Roller mowers suitable for tractors from 25 to 55hp. The 6ft machine has six free-swinging angled blades. The 8ft has eight blades. Cutting height adjustable from 14-90mm (0.5-3.5in) on four threaded adjusters. Price: £2,534 and £2,886.

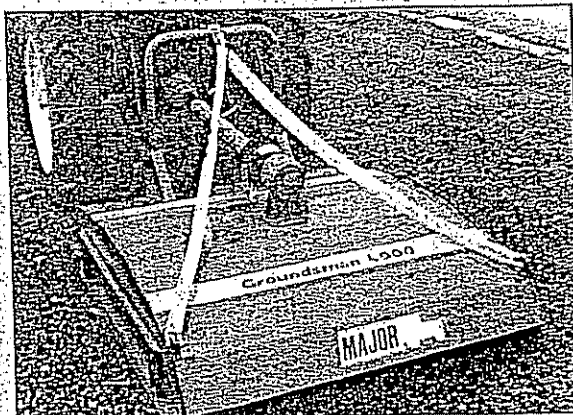
### Attack Engineering (Tel: 0507 609222)

Market roller mowers in 0.9m, 1.2m and 1.5m (3ft, 4ft and 5ft) widths; Grass Mulchers in 1.2m and 1.5m widths; Blowermowers in 1.2m and 1.5m widths. Tractor requirement from 15 to 80hp. All machines have a direct driven flywheel-type blade disc with four blades. Cutting height variable from 6-100mm (0.25-4in). Prices: from £1,140 to £2,790.

## OTHERS TO CONSIDER

### Major Equipment (Tel: 0484 450411)

The four foot (pictured right), six foot and eight foot Groundsman models have free-swinging blades driven by gearbox and shafts. Their power requirement goes from 25hp upwards, and they all offer a variable cutting height from 13mm-100mm (0.5-4in). They are priced at £1,245, £2,385 and £2,650 respectively.



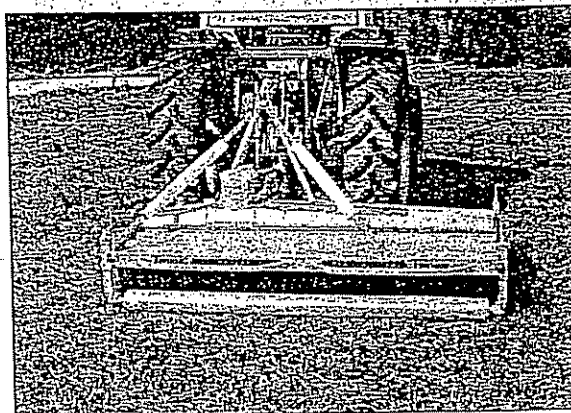
### United Equipment (Tel: 0954 718060)

Unicut 750 and 1250 (right) models in 2.13m and 3.8m (84in and 150in) widths. The 1250 has floating wings which fold for transport or narrower working. Swinging tip reversible blades are driven via gearbox and belts. Cutting height variable from 13-150mm (0.5-6in). Power requirement from 50hp. Prices from £3,450.



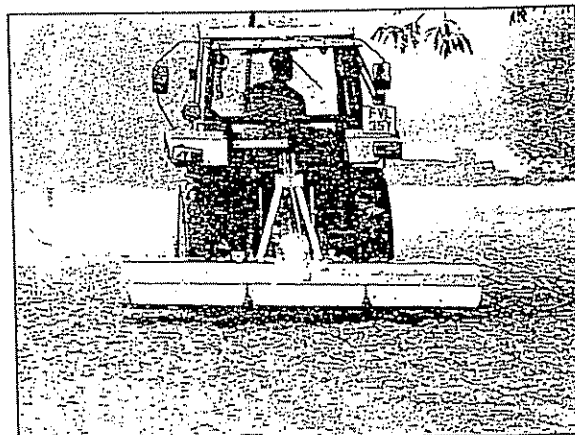
### Twose of Tiverton (Tel: 0884 253691)

The C-RM/7 (pictured right) and C-RM/9 have cut widths of 2.13m and 2.7m (7ft and 9ft) respectively. Suitable for tractors from 35 to 80hp, they have belt and gearbox drive to overlapping rotary blades. Cutting height varied on screw adjusters from 12-100mm (0.5in-4in). They are priced at £1,970 and £2,425 respectively.



### Votex Hereford (Tel: 0432 274361)

Votex offers the PM2 and PM3 Roller Mowers in 1.8m (shown right) and 2.7m (6ft and 9ft) working widths. Suitable for tractors from 25 to 75hp, the drive is by gearbox and belts to one-piece fluted blades. The cutting height of the Votex machines can be varied, using multi-hole adjusters, from 25-200mm (1-8in). Prices for the Votex range start at £2,800.





# Course gets a manicure from tee to green

It took Ivor Rogers, head greenkeeper at Wharton Park Golf Club, less than five minutes to decide that the Dowdeswell Roller-mower was the right machine for his grass cutting needs.

Recommended and demonstrated by local dealer, Oakleys of Shrewsbury, the mower so impressed Mr Rogers that he persuaded Steve Coleman, the club's owner, to buy two machines for the course.

"I'd never heard of the Roller-mower before Oakleys suggested we had a demonstration of the machine," commented Mr Rogers. "At the time, we were looking for a mower capable of dealing with the longer grass areas of the newly established course, which was reseeded totally in the autumn of 1991."

Deciding to give the Rollermower a real test, Ivor Rogers pointed Oakleys' demonstrator towards the orchard. "The grass was really tough and long, but the machine sailed through," said Ivor. "What really impressed me was its obvious strength, the finish of cut and the low tractor power requirement."

The decision to buy two 6ft Rollermowers was taken there and then. Immediate jobs for the machines were the topping of the reseeded fairways ready for the gang-mowers and the control of the rough and semi-rough areas around the spectacular 18 hole course.

Situated at Bewdley in Worcestershire, Wharton Park Golf Club opened fully for play in October 1992. The course, which measures a little over 6,600 yards, encompasses 140 acres and offers wonderful views across the rolling Worcester-



Ivor Rogers, head greenkeeper at the new Wharton Park Golf Club, Bewdley, Worcs, uses two Rollermowers to keep the semi-rough neatly trimmed throughout the year. The mower is equally effective driven forward or in reverse, which has proved helpful in tight corners.

shire countryside.

A major feature of the course is a 35 acre wood classified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and agreement has been reached between the club and the Nature Conservancy Council that the course is to be managed with conservation as a major consideration. To this end, 28 acres has been allocated for the creation of a new wildlife habitat.

The low noise level and the safe cutting abilities of the Rollermower will help ensure that wildlife disturbance is kept to a minimum. Having got the grass around the course under control, Ivor is now using the two machines every Monday and Tuesday to mow the semi-rough, minimising the risk of lost balls, but still giving the golfers a challenging shot to the greens.

"The mower gives a manicured result to complement the fairways and I particularly like the front and rear rollers which produce an attractive striped finish," commented Ivor.

It takes the two Rollermowers two whole days to trim all the medium-length grass bordering the fairways, and elsewhere, often working up to 12 hours with just short breaks. As a result, Ivor is very conscious of their rugged build and the benefit of having oil-immersed bearings.

"Quite simply, the machine does not become hot, running smoothly and quietly for hours on end," he pointed out.

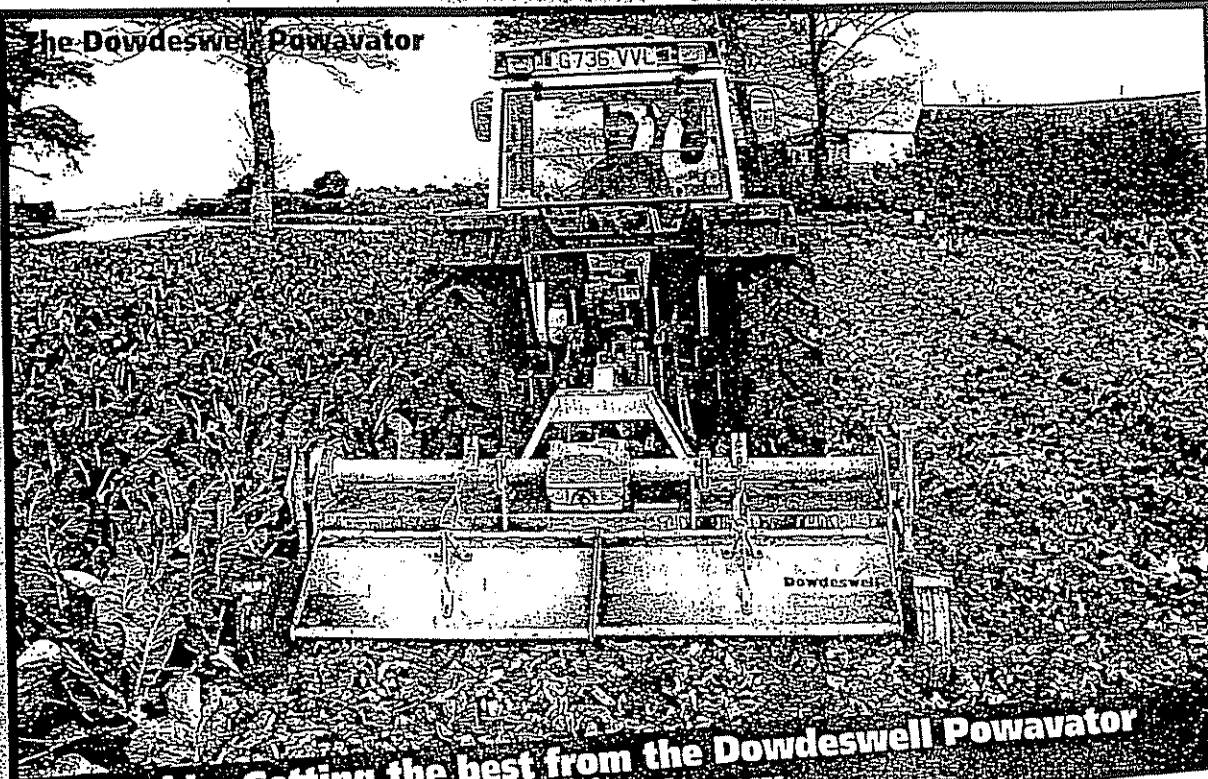
"I've yet to see another rotary mower which can perform to the same high level."

# Tillage

Winter 1992

by Dowdeswell

The Dowdeswell Powavator



Inside: Getting the best from the Dowdeswell Powavator  
& Power Harrow






**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

The undersigned counsel certifies that, on August 30, 2005, he electronically filed the foregoing document with the Clerk of the Court using CM/ECF, which will send automatic notification of the filing to the following:

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The undersigned counsel further certifies that copies of the foregoing document were sent by electronic filing and by hand to the above local counsel and by email and first class mail to the following non-registered participants:

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